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SUBJ: PRESIDENT RESUMES STUDENT DIALOGUE -- IN BAJA CALIFORNIA

1. MOST MEXICAN PAPERS APRIL 7 HEADLINED EXCERPTS FROM COMMENTS MADE BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA IN A THREE-HOUR MEETING WITH STUDENTS FROM THE REGIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF LA PAZ, BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR.

2. THE THEME OF THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS, DEVELOPED IN SOME DETAIL, WAS THAT MEXICO SHOULD SEEK ITS OWN COURSE AND NOT FOLLOW BLINDLY THOSE OF THE CAPITALIST AND SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. THE PRESIDENT RECOGNIZED THAT MEXICO NEEDS A MORE EGALITARIAN SOCIETY WITH A MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND WITH MORE JUSTICE, BUT HE URGED STUDENTS NOT TO CONSIDER A SYSTEM WHICH WILL JEOPARDIZE INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES. HE SAID, "THE HUMAN SPIRIT WILL ALWAYS REJECT TYRANNY -- NEVER GIVE UP THE CONCEPT OF LIBERTY." "I AM NOT", HE SAID, "ADVOCATING FREEDOM TO DIE OF HUNGER, BUT DON'T BE FOOLED . . . EVEN IN THOSE COUNTRIES (REFERRING HERE TO SOCIALIST STATES) IT IS ARGUED THAT DICTATORSHIPS ARE PROVISIONAL." LATER THE PRESIDENT SAID, "WE DO INDEED NEED TO AVOID THE GREAT PROBLEMS OF DECADENCE OF THE CONSUMER SOCIETY, ABOVE ALL OF OUR NEIGHBOR THE UNITED STATES WHERE CAPITALISM IS IN DECADENCE."

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3. A STUDENT QUESTIONER, IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS A MARXIST,

WAS TOLD BY THE PRESIDENT: "I AM INCLINED TO THINK THAT YOUR THESIS IS COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY BECAUSE IT IS NOT VERY DIALECTIC." WHEN THE STUDENT INSISTED THAT "MARXISM IS CHANGE", ECHEVERRIA REPLIED, "I BELIEVE THE OPPOSITE." HE ADDED, "IF WE ARE GOING TO LOOK FOR PATHS FOR MEXICO IN OUR TIME, HERE AND NOW, WE SHOULD THINK OF DEFENDING OURSELVES LIKE ALL THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AGAINST THE GREAT POWERS WHICH DISPUTE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPREMACY."

4. COMMENT: THIS SPEECH WAS CRITICAL OF TOTALITARIAN DICTATORSHIPS AS WELL AS THE "DECADENT" CONSUMER SOCIETY OF THE U.S. THE TECHNIQUE USED BY THE PRESIDENT REFLECTS THE COMMON PRI DICTUM THAT VIRTUALLY ALL OPPOSITION TO THE GOM OR PRI IS ALMOST BY DEFINITION "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY". AS ON MARCH 14 IN THE INCIDENT AT UNAM, ECHEVERRIA IN THIS SPEECH CHARACTERIZES THE VIEWS OF HIS INTERLOCUTOR AS COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY, PERHAPS BECAUSE SUCH CHARACTERIZATION IS THAT MOST LIKELY TO OFFEND AN AVOWED MARXIST. DESPITE THE SWIPE TAKEN AT THE "DECADENT" CONSUMER SOCIETY, THE MAJOR THRUST OF THE SPEECH WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF TOTALITARIAN DICTATORSHIPS AND, BY CLEAR IMPLICATION, THOSE OF THE SOCIALIST WORLD. THOUGH BAJA CALIFORNIA IS FAR FROM THE CAMPUS AT UNAM, ECHEVERRIA PROBABLY DID RECOVER SOME GROUND LOST AT THE MARCH 14 "DIALOGUE" IN THE EYES OF MOST MEXICANS.
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